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TAGS: [KFLU](#) [KSTH](#) [WHO](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [CASA](#) [TBIO](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC: PREPARATIONS FOR POSSIBLE H5N1
AVIAN FLU OUTBREAK

REF: A. STATE 37751

[1](#)B. 05 PRAGUE 1533

[1](#)C. 05 PRAGUE 1264

[1](#)1. Deputy Minister of Health and Chief Public Health Officer Michael Vit on March 19 briefed Embassy officials on Czech preparations for a possible H5N1 avian flu outbreak. In November 2006, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) reviewed national preparedness plans against an influenza pandemic and ranked the CR plans among the best in the EU.

Outbreak Risk & Czech Preparedness Plans

[1](#)2. According to the ECDC, the Czech Republic was one of 17 EU member states with H5N1 avian flu infected birds. Vit said a total of 12 dead swans with the lethal strain of avian flu, H5N1, have been found around lakes in southern Bohemia, all during 2006. Vit acknowledged that H5N1 has reached the CR from Asia, but noted that, to-date, there has been no reported cases of H5N1 spreading to poultry or to humans in the EU.

[1](#)3. Vit felt that the CR is not at high risk for an avian flu outbreak because of relatively few and small poultry farms and markets and low rates of direct human-to-poultry contact. Nevertheless, the GOCR has taken a number of steps to bring Czech plans into accordance with EU standards. Czech health and veterinary officials have revised their quarantine practices, established an emergency alert system with regional hospitals, fire brigades and police, and increased their stock of anti-influenza treatment drug Tamiflu. Vit explained that since the virus exhibits flu-like symptoms, the CR is stocking up on anti-influenza treatment drugs (Tamiflu). In 2005, the GOCR had in stock enough doses of Tamiflu for roughly 6% of the population, including for first responders and health workers at high risk. Today, Vit said there are doses for 20% of the population.

[1](#)4. Vit explained that there is currently no commercially available vaccine to specifically treat H5N1 bird flu in humans because scientists need specimens from pandemic H5N1 to create the vaccine. However, pharmaceutical companies must purchase supplies in advance for future vaccinations if they are to have enough on hand for large numbers of people. Vit said the GOCR plans to spend CZK 3 billion (USD 150 million) for enough future vaccination to cover 60% of the population by end 2007. Vit, who is heading a search and selection committee for suppliers, said six pharmaceutical suppliers in the CR are capable of producing this vaccine and ultimately

three suppliers will be selected in the next two-to-three months.

Mission Points of Contact

15. Responding to reftel A, Mission points of contact on avian and pandemic influenza are the following:

DOS: Economic Officer Peter Galus (galusp@state.gov) until 04/30/07,

Economic Officer Hart Nelson (nelsonhg@state.gov) starting 05/01/07

DOD: DAO Army Attache Col. Jeffrey Holachek (holachekjs@state.gov)

GRABER